

Statement to the Joint Committee on Planning and Development in support of HB 5170

Passing the white house on the corner on my ride home from work every day I would see the black dog in his small yard standing behind a chain-link fence. And every day, he would make me smile.

As the weather turned colder, he was still out there every day, looking out from behind the fence. Still, he would make me smile.

Then came the depths of winter with blowing snow, high winds and freezing rain. Yes, the black dog was still outside in the yard – this time curled up in a ball with no escape from the elements. Now I could no longer smile, but rather feel only sympathy for the poor animal and outrage at his owners. Who could leave an animal outside in these conditions with no concern for its welfare?

In my book, even one person is too many, but unfortunately, there are more instances of this type of abuse and neglect in Connecticut than we would like to acknowledge. And without effective intervention, the results can be fatal.

Currently, CT animal control officers (ACO) cannot step in unless a dog is injured or otherwise exhibiting clear signs of distress. By defining “adequate shelter” and requiring that it be made available to dogs whether tethered or confined in the yard, HB 5170 gives ACOs greater authority to intervene when dogs are not properly protected – before it’s too late.

With Connecticut’s harsh winters and hot summers, this legislation is long overdue in our State. It will bring Connecticut in line with the majority of states in the country with fair and humane policies aimed at shielding dogs from extreme weather.

You have an opportunity this session to take action by clarifying and strengthening Connecticut’s anti-animal cruelty statutes to better protect dogs left outside without shelter by irresponsible owners. I ask for your vote in favor of HB 5170. I cannot fathom how anyone could be against it!

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